

It's *All* in the Relationships:



Steps for Senior Corps Project Directors in Forming Strong Working Relationships With Our Members of Congress

Below are some questions to ask ourselves to determine our level of **relationship with our elected officials**. Communication with our legislators is for the purpose of educating those who represent us in Congress on the good work of our volunteers and our on-going need of support so they can continue to serve in our communities.

Increased funding for Senior Corps programs depends upon **the relationship** of each Senior Corps Project Director and their members of Congress.

The Difference between Lobbying and Educating

"Educating" is familiarizing a decisionmaker on the program, project, or activity which their decisionmaking may affect and the relevance of that activity to the work they do, the constituency they represent, or the issues they find important from experience. *Educating our elected officials about the accomplishments of our Senior Corps Programs should be an integral part of our duties as Project Directors!*

"Lobbying" is attempting to influence the outcome on a specific matter of legislation or regulatory action. It necessarily involves a specific "ask". *If Project Directors or volunteers write a letter or talk with a U.S. Senator or U.S. Representative about increased funding for FGP, RSVP and SCP, for instance, we must do so either on our own time or with local funding (non-federal and non-state).*

We should be able to answer **YES** to the following statements. The statements go from minimal to advanced involvement in the process of educating our Members of Congress about our programs (our goal). At the point where our answer is **NO**, we can stop here and work on that point.

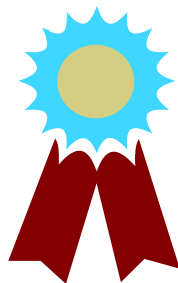
(continued)

1. I know the **name** of my U.S. Representative(s) and Senators.
2. I have the **websites** of my Representatives and Senators bookmarked in my on-line database.
3. I have my U.S. Representative(s)' and Senators' **e-mail, fax and phone numbers** for both their district and Washington offices in my on-line contact list. (I have also noted if my U.S. Rep or Senator require submission of e-mails directly from their website.)
4. My legislators or their representatives are invited and attend my **recognition events** on a regular basis.
5. I find opportunities to talk with my elected officials when they are in their **home districts** at least four times each year.
6. When I see my elected officials in their home districts, my U.S. Representative and at least one of my Senators **knows my name, the name of my program(s) and the service my FGP/RSVP/SC volunteers provide to the legislators' constituents.**
7. I know the **name of the staffer(s)** who works on senior issues in each of my elected officials' district offices.
8. These staffer(s) recognize **my name** whenever I call.
9. I know the **name of the staffer(s)** who works on senior issues in each of my elected officials' Washington offices.
10. These staffer(s) recognize **my name** whenever I call.
11. I have multiple copies of **pre-made fax cover sheets** (minus date) or a template for a customized fax sheet for each of my legislators in my database.
12. I keep an updated electronic file of "**Great Stories to Share**" so I can quickly insert them in letters to my elected officials.

(continued)

13. I can quickly locate **statistics on my program** to insert in letters to my elected officials including 1) number of volunteers; 2) number of children/clients/stations served; 3) math calculations (for instance, average yearly nursing home cost in my area vs. cost to support for one SC (approximately \$4,800/month) X # of SCs in your program supporting in-home care and independent living or the latest estimated cost of volunteers service (\$____) X # of RSVP or FGP volunteers in your program).
14. When my NSCA notifies me with an about about(delete) urgent request for e- mails/faxes/calls, I am able to **respond** immediately or by the deadline.
15. I can **report back** quickly on specific action I've taken in response to NSCA e-Alerts because I have info@nscatogether.org in my on-line contact list.

If you answered **YES** to every statement, you are playing a major role in educating Congress on the benefits of Senior Corps Programs for both volunteers and the children/clients/stations they serve. AND you are helping NSCA in our work to secure increased funding for Senior Corps Programs nationwide.



Thank you!!

Created by the National Senior Corps Association (NSCA) Legislative Committee, updated 2011. NSCA advocates for Foster Grandparent, RSVP and Senior Companion programs nationwide. For more information about NSCA or to become a member, visit our website: www.nscatogether.org